



Governor Abbott's Proactive Response to the Coronavirus Threat

From before COVID-19 was first detected in Texas, Governor Abbott has leveraged state, federal and local resources as well as private-sector support to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and to protect the health and safety of Texans across the state.

A high-level snapshot of actions taken by Governor Abbott; not inclusive of all briefings, hearings, proclamations, calls, actions or related events in Texas.

MOBILIZING STATE RESOURCES

- In January, Governor Abbott activates the State Medical Operations Center and all state emergency response agencies to implement existing statewide preparedness and response plans.
- At the Governor's direction, the Texas Task Force on Infectious Disease Preparedness and Response and the Texas Emergency Management Council begin regular meetings.
- At the Governor's direction, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) begins daily calls with public health authorities and providers.
- Governor Abbott declares a State of Disaster for all Texas counties due to the imminent threat posed, thereby authorizing the use of all available and necessary state resources to assist Texas communities.
- Governor Abbott and Attorney General Ken Paxton issue a joint statement on price gouging and announce a consumer hotline.
- Governor Abbott directs all state agencies to enact telework policies to ensure continuing service.
- Governor Abbott activates the Texas National Guard and deploys three brigades to assist health professionals and emergency responders on the front line.
- Governor Abbott announces the Texas Military Department and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working to identify and equip medical facilities if additional hospital capacity is needed.
- Governor Abbott provides a region-by-region update on medical and PPE supplies acquired by the Supply Chain Strike Force and distributed across Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces that Texas National Guard members are helping to staff a 24-hour operation to produce 2 million face masks a week for distribution in Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces an Executive Order on April 17 establishing the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas, including a Medical Advisory Board to guide the State's decisions on reopening Texas.

LEVERAGING FEDERAL RESOURCES

- In January, Governor Abbott joins HHS Secretary Alex Azar, federal health officials, Cabinet members and governors by phone for the first federal update on the coronavirus.
- In addition to speaking with President Trump and Vice President Pence, and ongoing calls with White House officials and Cabinet members, Governor Abbott joins regular calls with the vice president, federal agencies and the nation's governors.
- Governor Abbott requests the state's allocation of medical and pharmaceutical assets from the Strategic National Stockpile for distribution.
- Governor Abbott requests a statewide emergency designation for small business disaster loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration.
- Governor Abbott requests a presidential declaration of a major disaster.

- At Governor Abbott's direction, \$19.5 million from the state's initial \$36.9 million allotment of emergency congressional funding is distributed to 43 local health departments, with the remaining funds reserved for statewide efforts and to serve areas not covered by a local health department.
- Governor Abbott requests permission from the USDA to expand the use of SNAP food assistance.
- Governor Abbott requests interest-free Title XII loan funds to pay unemployment claims and also requests accelerated release of funds from the federal Unemployment Trust Fund.
- Governor Abbott submits a waiver asking for flexibility in administering Medicaid to expand care.
- Governor Abbott requests a waiver from HUD to provide financial housing assistance to certain Texans enduring economic hardships related to COVID-19.
- Governor Abbott continues to regularly consult by phone with the President, VP and White House health officials and federal agency administrators

WORKING WITH LOCAL LEADERS

- In January at the Governor's direction, DSHS begins daily calls with local public health authorities around the state and with San Antonio officials in relation to the repatriated Americans housed at JBSA-Lackland, as well as regular briefing calls with elected officials and local leaders around the state.
- DSHS, TDEM, the Texas Education Agency and all state agencies begin daily outreach to communities.
- Governor Abbott briefs legislators, mayors, county judges and other local elected officials by teleconference on the state's strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and ensure communities are prepared to respond to any confirmed cases in their area.
- At the Governor's direction, TEA issues guidance to K-12 public and open enrollment schools.
- Governor Abbott continues to regularly consult by phone and update state and local elected officials, ensuring local health needs are met and answering questions about the State's strategies to reopen Texas.
- Governor Abbott continues to recognize local business leaders who are adapting and innovating to help meet community needs.

KEEPING TEXANS INFORMED

- In January at the Governor's direction, DSHS launches a coronavirus information/resources page online and continues to broadly promote preventative hygiene measures; social posts are shared/amplified by other state agencies.
- Beginning in February, Governor Abbott hosts ongoing press briefings, joined by DSHS and the Texas Department of Emergency Management.
- Governor Abbott conducts almost daily media interviews with local and regional broadcast stations.
- Through ongoing social campaigns amplified by all state agencies, and televised public service announcements, Governor Abbott continually urges Texans to take preventative measures and to visit dshs.texas.gov for more information.
- Governor Abbott hosts a televised town hall to answer Texans' questions.
- Governor Abbott invites Texans to volunteer supplies, equipment and medical services by going to the state's portal: texas.gov
- First Lady Cecilia Abbott reminds Texans by video to check on older, isolated family members and neighbors who may be in need of food and medicine.
- Governor Abbott releases a video message to all Texans as his Executive Order goes into effect requiring all Texans to stay home unless they are participating in an essential service or activity.
- Governor Abbott holds a press briefing detailing the progress that Texas has made in slowing the spread, including county-by-county reporting.
- Governor Abbott has conducted 15 press conferences and 100 broadcast media interviews related to the State's response, commencing six days prior to the first confirmed case in Texas, as of April 10, 2020
- Governor Abbott continues to conduct regular press briefings and local/regional broadcast media interviews to update on the State's response.
- Governor Abbott holds a press conference on April 17 to announce the Governor's Strike Force to Open Texas; the State's reopening strategies will be guided by a Medical Advisory Board and with the advice of a Special Advisory Counsel of business leaders representing the state's regions and industries.

MITIGATING THE SPREAD IN TEXAS COMMUNITIES

- In January at the Governor's direction, DSHS begins regular posting of preventative hygiene steps; these social posts are amplified by state agencies.
- At the Governor's direction, capacity is added at the Texas Center for Infectious Disease to accept mildly symptomatic to asymptomatic patients from the JBSA-Lackland repatriate cohorts and relieve anticipated pressure on San Antonio hospitals.
- Governor Abbott sends a letter to the CDC demanding improved release protocols for individuals under federal quarantine at Lackland.
- Governor Abbott is briefed by the Texas Military Department on preventative health measures for Texas National Guard personnel.
- The Governor restricts non-critical visits to state-supported nursing homes, hospitals, prisons and other facilities.
- Governor Abbott allows virtual and telephonic open meetings to ensure government transparency.
- Governor Abbott postpones scheduled district and primary runoff elections.
- Governor Abbott issues Executive Orders prohibiting social gatherings of 10 or more, dine-in restaurants and bars, and non-critical visits to nursing homes, and temporarily closing schools.
- Governor Abbott mandates a 14-day self-quarantine for air travelers from NY, NJ, CT and New Orleans. That Executive Order is expanded to air travelers from additional hotspot locations, California, Louisiana, Washington, Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit and Miami, and to travel by car from Louisiana.
- Governor Abbott prohibits the release of individuals in county and municipal jail custody who are deemed a danger to society.
- Governor Abbott issues an Executive Order implementing Essential Services and Activities Protocols for the entire state of Texas to minimize non-essential gatherings and in-person contact.
- Governor Abbott provides a region-by-region update on medical and PPE supplies acquired by the Supply Chain Strike Force and distributed across Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces a 24-hour operation, staffed in part by Texas National Guard members, will produce 2 million masks per week for distribution in Texas.
- Governor Abbott updates the public at a press briefing on the distribution of PPE supplies across Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces an Executive Order closing schools through the academic year to mitigate the spread, though teachers may return for in-classroom video instruction.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- On March 5, Governor Abbott announces the launch of statewide testing capabilities.
- Governor Abbott asks health insurance providers to waive costs associated with the testing and telemedicine visits.
- Governor Abbott directs state agencies to take any action necessary to support telemedicine.
- Governor Abbott fast-tracks licensing for out-of-state medical professionals.
- Governor Abbott announces Texas will receive an initial 15,000 testing kits from FEMA, in addition to testing capabilities already announced.
- Governor Abbott holds a video call with hospitals to discuss capacity.
- Governor Abbott holds a press conference at the San Antonio Emergency Operations Center to update on the state's actions and the San Antonio drive-through coronavirus testing site. He announces other major cities are working to implement drive-through testing sites to be run and managed at the local level.
- Governor Abbott activates the Texas National Guard to assist medical professionals and emergency responders on the front line.
- Governor Abbott waives certain regulations to expand patient access to telemedicine.
- At the Governor's direction, DSHS declares a Public Health Disaster, triggering important tools for public health authorities.
- Testing by public health authorities and private providers continue to increase weekly, following prescribed protocols for eligibility.
- Governor Abbott waives regulations to allow phone consultations by pharmacists, and waives regulations to expand nursing workforce.

- Governor Abbott issues an Executive Order increasing hospital capacity, announces a Supply Chain Strike Force and increases hospital room occupancy.
- Governor Abbott directs hospitals to submit daily reports on bed capacity and all providers to update daily on COVID-19 tests.
- Governor Abbott announces an initial \$83 million order of medical supplies ordered by the new Supply Chain Strike Force, along with donations of supplies from Texas medical professionals.
- Governor Abbott invites Texans to volunteer supplies, equipment and medical services by going to the state's portal: [texas.gov](https://www.texas.gov)
- Governor Abbott extends license renewal periods for nurses, extends license renewal periods for pharmacists and expedites reactivation for advanced practice registered nurses.
- Governor Abbott receives his requested federal approval to automatically renew Medicaid and SNAP food assistance until further notice, and to suspend the requirement that renewing recipients and new applicants be interviewed.
- Governor Abbott announces the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas is being equipped as a back-up hospital facility should it be needed.
- Governor Abbott waives certain regulations to expand EMS and emergency responder workforce.
- Because of proactive measures and waivers issued by Governor Abbott, hospital bed availability in Texas has increased by 140 percent since March 18.
- Governor Abbott provides a region-by-region update on medical and PPE supplies acquired by the Supply Chain Strike Force and distributed across Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces a 24-hour operation staffed in part by Texas National Guard members will produce 2 million masks per week for distribution in Texas.
- Governor Abbott continues to temporarily waive regulations: Expanding the healthcare workforce; allowing off-site outpatient end-stage renal disease facilities; expanding telehealth options; allowing more nurse aides to serve residents in long-term care facilities; and increasing hospital and medical facility staffing.
- Governor Abbott updates the public at a press briefing on the distribution of PPE supplies across Texas.
- Governor Abbott announces an Executive Order loosening some restrictions on surgeries and medical procedures while ensuring hospital capacity and sufficient PPE supplies.

REMOVING REGULATORY ROADBLOCKS

- After issuing a State of Disaster proclamation on March 13, with 39 COVID-19 cases in Texas confirmed and because of the imminent threat posed, Governor Abbott begins waiving state regulations to remove roadblocks and better meet Texans' needs during the emergency period:
 - Certain state trucking regulations to help speed deliveries
 - Allowing trucks from alcohol industry to deliver grocery supplies
 - Ensuring students receive work-study funding
 - STAAR testing requirements
 - Vehicle registration, titling and parking placard regulations
 - Expanding hospital capacity
 - Expanding patient access to telemedicine care
 - Speeding payment of new unemployment benefits
 - Extending driver license renewal deadlines
 - Allowing delivery of alcoholic beverages with food
 - Temporarily closing DPS driver license offices
 - Waiving health care fees for incarcerated Texans
 - Suspending residential eviction proceedings (Texas Supreme Court)
 - Allowing event permit refunds for businesses
 - Allowing phone consultations by pharmacists
 - Expanding nursing workforce in Texas
 - Creating a Supply Chain Strike Force
 - Increasing occupancy of hospital rooms
 - Allowing restaurants to sell bulk products to consumers
 - Expanding healthcare facilities

- Extending licensing renewal period for nurses
- Preserving and extending child care capacity
- Extending licensing renewal period for pharmacists
- Expediting reactivation for advanced practice registered nurses
- Waiving COVID-19 cost-sharing for public safety employees
- Expanding EMS and emergency responder workforce
- Expanding healthcare workforce
- Allowing off-site outpatient end-stage renal disease facilities
- Waiving federal match for victims services grant recipients
- Allowing for video appearance before Notary Public
- Expanding telehealth options
- Allowing more nurse aides to serve residents in long-term care facilities
- Increasing hospital and medical facility staffing

HELPING FAMILIES, SMALL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES TO COPE

- In January at Governor Abbott's direction, DSHS begins posting coronavirus information and resources online and broadly promotes preventative hygiene measures.
- At Governor Abbott's direction, TEA shares preventative guidance with school districts.
- Governor Abbott declares a State of Disaster for all Texas counties due to the imminent threat posed, thereby authorizing the use of all available and necessary state resources to assist Texas communities.
- Governor Abbott and Attorney General Paxton issue a joint statement on reports of price-gouging and announce a consumer hotline.
- Governor Abbott briefs legislators, mayors and county officials by phone conference on the state's strategies to mitigate spread and ensure communities are prepared to respond.
- Governor Abbott waives certain state trucking regulations to expedite delivery of resources in Texas.
- Governor Abbott waives laws to allow trucks from alcohol industry to deliver grocery supplies.
- Governor Abbott waives regulations to ensure students in work-study programs receive critical funding during school closures.
- Governor Abbott waives STAAR testing requirements and requests waiver for federally required testing.
- Governor Abbott hosts a televised town hall to answer Texans' questions about the state's response.
- Governor Abbott waives the waiting period for new unemployment benefits to speed payments to impacted families across the state.
- Governor Abbott holds call with mayors, county judges to discuss state and local response strategies.
- Governor Abbott's request for an emergency designation for small business statewide receives federal approval, making small business disaster loans from SBA available in Texas.
- Governor Abbott and TEA announce a Texas Students MealFinder Map to ensuring continuing access to the school lunch program.
- Governor Abbott offers supplemental grants through his Public Safety Office to fund critical needs for providers serving foster and homeless youth and kinship care families.
- Governor Abbott issues a waiver allowing restaurants to sell bulk retail products directly to consumers.
- Governor Abbott announces a \$16.2 million grant to help communities provide meals for older adults.
- First Lady Cecilia Abbott posts a video on social channels reminding Texans to check in on older or isolated family and neighbors.
- Governor Abbott waives certain TWC regulations to extend child care capacity for front line workers.
- Governor Abbott's request to automatically renew Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and to suspend interview requirements receives federal approval.
- Governor Abbott announces the Comfort Food Care Package program to provide meals for at-risk youth and families, and to support local restaurants.
- Governor Abbott announces a federal stimulus package to relieve the economic impact on unemployed workers and the state's hardest-hit businesses; includes retroactive payments of unemployment benefits.
- Governor Abbott announces grants totaling \$14.1 million awarded to various military communities across the state to ensure installations continue to add military value and to protect jobs.

- Governor Abbott and TEA announce the launch of a “Stay Well, Texas” campaign in English and Spanish to reach families across the state.
- Governor Abbott issues an Executive Order implementing Essential Services and Activities Protocols to encourage Texans to stay at home except for essential activities; within the order is a process for businesses to determine if they meet DHS’ definition of essential and to petition TDEM to be designated as essential.
- Governor Abbott announces Care.com is increasing in-home child care access for frontline workers responding to the COVID-19 emergency.
- Governor Abbott announces more than \$168 million in emergency SNAP food benefits.
- Governor Abbott announces a new online Frontline Child Care website to help essential workers in Texas to locate child care.
- Governor Abbott announces \$50 million in small business loans in partnership with Goldman Sach and the LiftFund along with other community development financial institutions (CDFIs).
- Governor Abbott announces more than 1,130,000 unemployment claims totaling well over \$400 million have been paid out to Texans whose jobs were impacted by COVID-19 as of April 13, 2020.
- First Lady Cecilia Abbott launches a Stars of Texas Storytime for children on Facebook.
- The Governor’s Economic Development & Tourism division begins webinar series for small businesses in addition to recovery resources and information provided online and through email blasts.
- Governor Abbott announces his Pubic Safety Office will provide \$38 million in federal funds to local governments.
- Governor Abbott announces Executive Orders: establishing the Governor’s Strike Force to Open Texas; directing select services to reopen under a Retail-To-Go strategy; closing schools for the remainder of the year other than to support video instruction by teachers; and loosening some restrictions on surgeries and medical procedures while ensuring hospital capacity and sufficient PPE supplies. The State’s reopening strategies will be guided by the Strike Force Medical Advisory Board and with the advice of the Strike Force Special Advisory Counsel of business leaders representing the state’s regions and industries.

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April 17, 2020